

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable consideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 4, 5, 7 and 14-18 are presently pending in this application, Claims 2, 3, 6 and 8-13 having been canceled, Claim 1 having been amended, and Claims 14-18 having been newly added by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 4 and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Katano et al. (U.S. Patent 6,333,003) in view of Sakai et al. (U.S. Patent 6,159,541); Claims 1 and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Katano et al. in view of Fischli et al. (U.S. Patent 5,690,995); Claims 1 and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Batchelder (U.S. Patent 5,472,502) in view of Fischli et al.; and Claims 1 and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nanbu et al. (U.S. Patent 5,565,034) in view of Fischli et al. However, Claims 2, 3, 6 and 7 were indicated as including allowable subject matter.

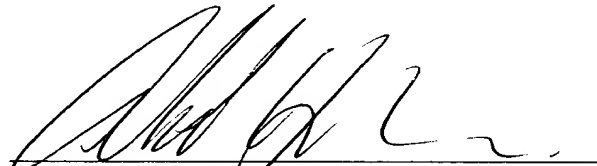
First, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that Claims 2, 3, 6 and 7 include allowable subject matter. Accordingly, Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter recited in Claim 2; Claim 14 written based on the subject matters recited in Claims 1 and 3 has been newly added; Claims 15 and 16 corresponding to original Claims 4 and 5, respectively, and depending from Claim 14 have been newly added; Claim 17 written based on the subject matters recited in Claims 1, 2 and 6 has been newly added; and Claim 18 written based on the subject matters recited in Claims 1, 2 and 7 has been newly added. As a result, Claims 2, 3 and 6 have been canceled. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully request non-elected Claims 8-13 be canceled without prejudice.

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Reply to Office Action of August 1, 2003

In light of the prior indication of allowable subject matter and in view of the amendments presented above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding, and thus the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request an early and favorable action.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory J. Maier', is written over a horizontal line.

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